

Southeast Region

Hurricane Katrina Report

September 9, 2005



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Incident Management Team is located in Lacombe, Louisiana at Big Branch NWR, headquarters for the Southeast Louisiana Complex. The team continues to expand its community service activities (clearing roads, establishing emergency corridors, etc.) throughout the local community, the Gulf Coast, and the North Shore of Lake Pontchartrain. We are expanding our mission to include debris clean up around public sites such as schools, hospitals, police departments, court houses, etc. We estimate that there nearly 200 Service employees deployed within the various missions in which our agency is participating. Approximately 100 of those employees are based at the Lacombe facility.

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for a 14 day detail. They will be working under a request from FEMA performing search and rescue missions in Jon boats and airboats that our agents and officers will bring with them.

Wildfire continues to be a major concern with no additional rainfall since Hurricane Katrina. Therefore, we are adding personnel and bringing some additional equipment into the area to prepare for the contingency of wildfires.

The Service's Ecological Services program has prepared a list of contaminants-trained individuals, vehicles, and boats that are available from the Southeast Region to help with hurricane response. It also has prepared a request to other Service regional offices seeking potential volunteers for assignments to the Southeast to aid cleanup efforts. Once needs are determined, requests for assistance will be made.

Ecological Services has three people working in the Alabama and Mississippi areas, but we expect to need more as the specific needs are clarified. The Service staff on site now are involved in identifying hazardous materials and identifying priorities for clean-up.

The U.S. Coast Guard has agreed to open a Pollution Funding Removal Authorization (PFRA) to fund our contaminant activities in Alabama and Mississippi. The funding levels are \$50,000 and \$100,000 respectively and can be adjusted upward, as needed. No PFRA has been opened for activities in Louisiana as yet. The Coast Guard led PFRA work in Alabama and Mississippi has started. We had people helping in the Biloxi area yesterday. As of 9/8/05, the Daphne Field Office had a boat and equipment working with the National Park Service – Gulf Islands National Seashore to survey the islands off shore

of Mississippi for sources of petroleum and hazardous materials. This request was processed through DOI – Greg Hogue.

On Thursday, one Service crew working out of Lacombe, Louisiana, cut into debris and cleared the driveway of a home where they found an individual who was on a life support system which was about to run out of fuel. In addition to clearing the driveway to open up the home, our crew provided fuel for the life support system, and secured the roof of that home. Another Service crew found a frustrated 14-year old girl trying to assemble a generator. The group assisted her by assembling and hooking up the generator. Then they provided her with enough fuel to keep it running.

A third Service crew came across an elderly woman who had no fuel, food, or water. Her daughter and friend were using a sailboat and Jon boat in attempts to find food and water for the three of them. The daughter and friend had resorted to siphoning gasoline from their car for fuel for the boat motor. Our rescue workers provided them with MREs, water, and fuel for their generator.

The watercraft search and rescue operation based at the Mandalay NWR in Houma, Louisiana is working out of the St. Bernard Parish Fire Station in Arabi, Louisiana. The eight Service crews worked under the direction of Fire Chief Tom Storm and Captain Ourso. Six of the crews responded to 911 calls received from people who had not evacuated from various areas of St. Bernard Parish, mostly in the Arabi-Mereaux area. They cleared 30 houses, removed three evacuees, and observed one deceased person. The other two crews were dispatched to provide assistance (transport service only) to a mortuary group who was working on removing about 35 fatalities from a nursing home.

Additional information

Media contact coordination is being handled by the Regional Office of External Affairs 404/679 7287.

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Tom Crews, Rick Huffines, and Brian Hardison discuss community assistance activities at Lacombe, Louisiana, northeast of New Orleans.

The Service continues to provide support (food, water, fuel, a safe place for the night) to local police, fire departments, Red Cross volunteers, National Guard, and law enforcement engaged in the search and rescue efforts in New Orleans and throughout the impact area. This facility is providing approximately 350-400 meals per day, of which 200 meals are being sent to support a local hospital.

The Service's Southeast Region Office of Law Enforcement agents completed their search and rescue mission and left the area yesterday. Another group of 10 Special Agents and 10 Refuge Officers from around the country are being dispatched to New Orleans this weekend